

New building slated for Lynn Arden's children's corner

By **LESLIE TRULUCK**
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY – Long before the Washington Street Mall was a paved shopping outlet, the corner of Jackson and Washington Street was known for Connelly's Fine Children's Store.

Sarah Connelly sold Polly Flinders smocked dresses for little girls and Buster Brown shoes for little boys to wear on holidays. The corner has seen many changes through the years but continues to be a place to shop for children's clothing in Cape May. Lynn Arden Kramer, present owner and namesake of Lynn Arden's Children's Store, said the building has been a children's store since the early 1900s.

Arden, who prefers to go by her middle name, is a registered nurse from Chester, Pa. who decided to open a shop in Cape May. Arden and her

husband Jack Kramer bought the store in 1983 and continued its history as a store specializing in children's clothing, toys, and accessories from infants to children size 14.

Arden reminisced how the couple bought the building the same day it went on sale.

"There was already another bid because it is such a prominent area on the corner of the mall," Arden said. The business's outside windows display "big brother" and "big sister" bibs and bonnets.

The Historical Preservation Committee (HPC) deemed the building of no historical significance to the city though the little clothing store on the mall has contributed to the unique boutique style of the Washington Street Mall.

Demolition began Oct. 16 to make way for a new and improved three-story building.

Last week the Kramer's began moving inventory from the Jackson Street store to the little yellow "Arden's Children" boutique on Carpenter's Lane.

The traditionally year-round store on the mall will be closed this winter, timing its rebuilding with the mall revitalization project.

Completion is anticipated in May 2008. Meanwhile, the sister store on Carpenter's Lane will remain open.

"In the entire time we've owned this store it has only been closed for Thanksgiving and Christmas with the exception of hurricanes or inclement weather," Arden said.

The zoning board approved these renovations and the building that will stay in the same footprint as the original.

"The new building will fit very well with the architectural design of Cape May," Arden said.

The Kramers said they started preparing for this project in 2005.

Demolition will begin by removing shingles laden with asbestos and other issues where the older building doesn't meet contemporary safety codes.

Where there were once stairs the new store will be at street level in accordance with the needs of the handicapped and pedestrians with strollers.

The new plans involve adding an elevator to the second floor shopping area and using a third floor addition for storage. The Kramers are satisfied with the architectural plans provided by S.J. Fenwick Associates.

"The (new) building will have a more Victorian look than the other (older) one," Jack Kramer said. The Kramers have hired Future Image Construction and Consulting, Inc. to build the

proposed 2,000 square foot building with a 1,300 square foot retail space as approved by the HPC.

The second floor will concentrate on the children's apparel while the first floor will display the store's traditional merchandise consisting of baby bonnets, toys and accessories.

The Kramers say their store offers fashions at prices that can compete with the large chain stores.

"This is an investment not only in our customers of 24 years but also our associates—some who have worked with us for 15 years," Jack Kramer said.

"We support the city's investment in repaving the mall and the improvements to our store are encouraged by the mayor, city council, and the city manager.

"The mall is a tremendous attraction to the city and people come from all around to

this mall – just look around on any given day," Jack Kramer said.

"We are committed to a first class retail operation," Kramer said, crediting store manager Lisa Hartster with overseeing its successful operation.

"This is a fun place to work because children come to get a new outfit for happy occasions like christenings, birthdays, and holidays. I enjoy working with the kids and helping the customers find the right thing," Hartster said.

Lynn Arden's takes pride in being a full-service store that provides assistance from finding the right size to gift-wrapping.

"We are very excited for this project," Hartster said.

"Please come visit us on Carpenter's Lane," Arden said, reassuring customers, "We will be back and better than ever."

Lawsuit

Continued from page A1

validates the deliberate and open process that the mayor and council undertook in planning for the reconstruction of the Washington Street Mall," city solicitor Anthony Monzo said.

The city's attorney in this case Andrew Catanese said New Jersey law gives municipalities clear authority to make public improvements and the authority to establish the method and materials to be used to determine the means of funding those improvements.

In dismissing the plaintiff's complaint the court conceded the city has the authority to fund the mall project as general improvements.

"Now the city has a carte

blanche and the ability to bond anything they say is for the public good so hold on to your wallets," Concerned Taxpayer member Jay Schatz said.

"It's very disturbing that the city doesn't have to follow its own ordinance in a bond issue situation. When the city arbitrarily decides it doesn't need to follow its own laws in legal issues it is disconcerting. The laws should be on the same playing field but they keep changing," said Dr. Scott Maslow, president of the Concerned Taxpayers of Cape May.

Cape May City amended the original ordinance so the municipality has the authority to decide financing for gen-

eral improvements.

"We are pleased the complaint was dismissed by the court quickly rather than prolonging this litigation and delaying the mall's rehabilitation," Catanese said.

"Now that the lawsuit is over, we hope to proceed with plans to complete the mall project and continue to work toward the development of a Business Improvement District (BID) which will require the businesses around the mall to contribute toward the continuing maintenance," said Mayor Jerome Inderwies.

"A draft ordinance to establish the BID has been prepared and we will be meeting with representatives of the

various businesses proposed to be included in the district to work out the details before presenting it to the city council at an upcoming work session. It is fully expected that a BID will be in place by the time the construction of the mall is completed," City Manager Lou Corea said.

"It would be great to have a BID or SID (Special Improvement District) because it would require the landowners to participate in the process and be involved in controlling their own destiny rather than having the city manager or council decide the fate of the mall," Maslow said.

The dismissal of the lawsuit concludes a lengthy process

of determining financing for the mall reconstruction project initially proposed in a bond ordinance last year at a projected cost of over \$5 million.

The initial ordinance was rejected in a referendum vote in August 2006 with resident Christine Miller leading the rejection.

City Council then established a mall sub-committee that examined the options for the mall and presented a revised plan to city council.

The revised plan expanded the scope of the project and reduced the projected total cost to approximately \$3.5 million. Most of the total cost is dedicated to the brick surfacing at a cost of \$2.8 mil-

lion.

"The Taxpayer's group is not against the beautification of the mall. That's not the issue, it's the city not abiding by the ordinance it set in place themselves," Maslow said.

Mall improvements will commence this winter with the replacement of underground water and sewer utilities through a separate bond ordinance at a cost of \$400,000.

The city anticipates the mall revitalization project completed in time for the 2008 tourist season.

Vision

Continued from page A1

street, and crosswalks be improved throughout the avenue.

He said the firm recommended upgrading streets in the historic district, encouraging the use of fences and gardens along Lafayette Street, and converting the backs of stores along Lyle Lane to storefronts.

As usual, many of the planner's recommendations include cooperation and investment by private citizens and businesses.

"Other communities started small and worked up to major improvements," Rhodeside said.

Kelly Brown, a financial consultant dealing with Rhodeside and Harwell, said the city could look at a number of financial mechanisms for funding the public improvements; such a special

assessment district, a special or business improvement district (SID/BID), federal and state grant options and public/private development.

Brown said there were a number of elements in the vision, including the improved gateway, intersection and sidewalk upgrades, which could be funded on a pay as you go basis. Improved bike routes and a reconstructed Convention Hall might require long term financing, such as bonding.

Asked about the cost of the total revitalization effort, Brad Gardner of Rhodeside and Harwell said the firm looked at a range of costs before recommending upgrades, but no specific figures. Rhodeside said the purpose of their project was to come up with a vision and guidelines for the project,

only.

"Was the cost part of the vision?" resident Harry Belangy said.

"We looked at the city's revenue and what it can afford," Gardner said.

Brown said there is no one, big plan to make all of the upgrades at once.

"This is a 25-year plan," she said.

Resident and Taxpayers Association member Jack Wichterman asked what Brown was talking about when she mentioned increased tax revenue in her talk about "financial mechanism." Brown said she was referring to increased property tax revenue. She said the improvements to the public realm and private improvements made as part of the revitalization effort would lead to increased assess-

ments.

Rhodeside said the vision guidelines would be turned over to the city and later reviewed by the county engineer. He said on approval of the guidelines the city could

go out to bid and begin work in the spring.

Taxpayer Association president Dennis Crowley said it was helpful to view the Rhodeside and Harwell report, saying it gave the resi-

dents a vision of what the town could look like. However, he added that the vision was like a "buffet," and the city could take from it what it wanted.

Point

Continued from page A1

tors.

As part of the 50-year federally mandated Army Corps of Engineers Beach Refurbishment Plan the borough is required to install one public bathroom. The bathroom location is not yet determined but Fraser said there are only a number of areas available that are not private land or owned by state Green Acres.

Residents expressed concern for the possible influx of picnicking day-trippers that may result in having a bathroom.

Fraser said the borough is mandated by the state to provide a restroom if it continues

to receive funding from selling beach tags.

"We have no choice," Fraser said.

Resident Anita Van heeswyk requested the commissioners retain the character of the community.

Commissioner Carl Schupp

TOO LATE TO CLASSIFY

MULTI-FAMILY YARD SALE – 817 Stockton Ave., Fri. & Sat., Oct. 19 & 20, 9:00 a.m. till! Furniture, tools, electronics, etc. etc. Everything must go.

explained the village designation is voluntary and all municipalities are eligible to apply.

"We have already completed the requirements we just have to send it to the state," Fraser said.

AART's Cape May Taxi
www.capemaytaxi.com

We're on your side
CALL 898-RIDE (898-7433)

- safe and reliable
- all local communities
- clean, comfortable
- airports
- local and distance
- child safety seats

SURROUNDINGS
Goes pink in October



During the Month of October Enjoy 30% OFF all Orders

Carter Furniture, Elite Leather & Lee Industries & 20% OFF Maine Cottage & Bella Bella

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to AtlantiCare Breast Health Program

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Shoppes at Cornerstone
1201 New Road, Linwood
609.601.7000
Monday-Saturday 10 to 6
Sunday 12 to 4

www.surroundingsfurniture.com

HALLOWEEN

in haunted Cape May!

THROUGH OCTOBER 31

Phantoms of the Physick Estate

1048 WASHINGTON ST., CAPE MAY
Family-friendly self-guided tours of Cape May's original haunted house decorated for Halloween...spooky sounds, special effects, and exciting stuff!

Oct. 20: 11 am-4 pm & Oct. 27: 1-6 pm

Plus much, much more...

- GHOSTS OF CAPE MAY TROLLEY TOURS**
- GHOSTS OF THE LIGHTHOUSE**
- A RIDE WITH THE GHOST WRITER**
- MADAME PARMENTIER'S PSYCHIC TEA**
- MURDER MYSTERY DINNERS & LUNCHEON**

For more information, call 609-884-5404 or visit

www.capemaymac.org